" We must start this play a living thing/' he used to say at rehearsals, and he worked until the skin grew tight over his face, until he became livid with fatigue, yet still beautiful, to get the opening lines said with individuality, suggestiveness, speed, and power.

Bernardo : Who's there ?
Francisco : Nay, answer me; stand, and unfold yourself*
Bernardo : Long live the King I
Francisco : Bernardo ?
Bernardo : He.
Francisco : You coine most carefully upon your hour.
Bernardo : *Tis now struck twelve ; get thee to bed, Francisco.
Francisco : For this relief much thanks ; 'tis bitter cold. .. .

And all that he tried to make others do with these lines, he himself did with every line of his own part. Every word lived.

Some said: " Oh, Irving only makes Hamlet a love poem i" They said that, I suppose, because in the Nunnery scene with Ophelia he was the lover above the prince and the poet.. With what passionate longing his hands hovered over Ophelia at her words :

> " Hick gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.'[1]

His advice to the players was not advice. He did not speak it as an actor. Nearly all Hamlets in that scene give away the fact that they are actors, and not dilettanti of royal blood. Irving .defined the way he would have the players speak as an *order,* an instruction of the merit of which he was regally sure. There was no patronising flavour in his acting here, not a touch of " I'll teach you how to do it." He was swift—swift and simple—pausing

for the right word now and again, as in the phrase " to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature." His slight pause and